



## Cultural Blast

9th annual CultureFest brings 4,000 students together

By Dion Hazelbaker | IDS | August 29, 2008

A group of six Korean Samulnori drummers performed for about 4,000 freshmen and returning upperclassmen who gathered in the IU Auditorium Thursday evening.

This was IU's ninth annual CultureFest. It began in the IU Auditorium and moved to the Showalter Fountain area on Seventh Street.

Shortly after the drummers finished performing their rhythmic tunes, the Office of Orientation Programs leaders and sophomores Eunice Ntiamoah and Drew Anderson took the stage to introduce the guest speaker of the event, Ed Gerety.

### **VIDEO:** [Culture Fest 2008](#)

Gerety began his speech with witty humor, explaining his past speaking roles with first-graders all the way up to college students.

"Indiana University, we all love those important lessons that were being taught to those first-graders," Gerety said. "As we step out of our comfort zones, as we respect and celebrate what makes us different, as we embrace what connects us."

Gerety reminisced over a story about first-graders and how they worked together to grow flowers, explaining how all individuals should strive for the teamwork skills that bonded the class.

Gerety went on to speak about how about people forget to appreciate and celebrate the privilege of opportunities, such as a college experience, as they get older.

"Not only in college but in life, people do not care how much you know, what position you hold, what title or degree you have after your name, until they know how much you care," Gerety said.

The speaker then summoned one of the audience members up to the stage to call whoever he would choose if he only had one hour left to live. The student walked on stage, called his mother and ended his conversation with an "I love you" that was greeted with cheers and "awws" from the rest of the audience.

One of the key points Gerety made throughout his speech was that people often lose sight of appreciating and understanding others, especially when they do not take the time to understand or be involved in others' lives.

"The biggest mistake we could ever make here at Indiana or beyond is to not be ourselves," Gerety said, concluding an anecdote about students trying to impress at another person's expense.

As students made rain with different hand motions, Gerety told the crowd to remember the idea of karma and the ripple effect: What comes around goes around, and everything you do will affect another in some way.

"The speaker was my favorite part of CultureFest," said freshman Laura Westervelt.

She said he was her favorite because he spoke in a humorous but poignant manner.

Outside the auditorium, streets filled and bands played as students stuffed themselves with cultural food from various campus culture centers.

The culture centers attending CultureFest this year included the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center; La Casa; and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Student Support Services.

Freshman Molly McLetchie said she loved the food, commenting on the multicolored ice cream dished out by the GLBT booth.

Cultural centers were not the only organizations present: The IU Student Radio Station WIUX participated and schools such as the School of Fine Arts had booths.

“Indiana, we must remember that we do not know everything about everyone; we do not know everyone’s story,” Gerety said. “I’m also saying though, IU, that we ought to be respectful and compassionate, just because we are all unique and different. And we must embrace that uniqueness and celebrate it.”

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